

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BOGOTA 01552 171442Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9944

S E C R E T BOGOTA 01552

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ASEC, PINS, CASC, CO
SUBJECT: KIDNAPPING OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER: SITREP 9

1. WITH HELP OF POLICE AUTHORITIES, EMBASSY PERSONNEL
SUCCEEDED IN SETTING UP LONG-DISTANCE TELEPHONE INTERVIEW
WITH JUDGE JULIO PADILLA, WHO WAS EYE-WITNESS TO THE FARC ATTACK
AND TO THE KIDNAPPING OF STARR.

2. JUDGE PROVIDED FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE
INCIDENT: FARC UNIT ARRIVED AT THE INDERENA CABIN ABOUT 3 AM
FEB 14. STARR, THE JUDGE AND SOME OTHER WORKERS AT THE INSTITUTE
WERE TOLD TO LEAVE THE CABIN AND LIE DOWN ON THE GROUND OUTSIDE.
SHOOTING WAS TAKING PLACE IN CONNECTION WITH ATTACK ON POLICE POST
SO THE GUERRILLAS TOLD THE GROUP TO GO BACK INTO THE REAR OF THE
HOUSE TO AVOID GETTING HIT BY CROSS-FIRE. AT ABOUT 5 AM, THE FARC
BEGAN
QUESTIONING THE GROUP. WHEN THEY GOT TO STARR, HE WAS ASKED HIS
NAME, WHAT HE WAS DOING THERE, HOW MUCH SALARY HE RECEIVED AND HOW
OLD HE WAS. STARR GAVE HIS NAME, SAID HE WAS AN AMERICAN CITIZEN
AND PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER, EXPLAINED THAT HE WAS WORKING ON PLANT-
LIFE, THAT HE HAD ARRIVED IN SEPTEMBER 1976 AND THAT HE
RECEIVED 6,000 PESOS MONTHLY. THE JUDGE HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT
THE FARC MEMBERS WHO FIRST QUESTIONED STARR DID NOT UNDERSTAND
WHAT THE PEACE CORPS WAS.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BOGOTA 01552 171442Z

3. THE LEADER OF THE FARC UNIT THEN ARRIVED AND HIS MEN
POINTED OUT STARR TO HIM AS AN AMERICAN. THE UNIT LEADER WENT
OVER THE SAME QUESTIONS AND THEN ASKED STARR WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE
FOR HIM AND STARR REPLIED "THE AMERICAN EMBASSY". ONE OF
THE FARC THEN SAID "HE IS GOOD" AND TOLD STARR TO GO WITH THEM.

4. THE JUDGE SAID STARR WAS TOLD TO PACK HIS BELONGINGS.

STARR ASKED THE JUDGE TO COME WITH HIM TO HIS ROOM TO ADVISE HIM WHAT TO PACK. JUDGE PADILLA ADVISED AGAINST HEAVY ITEMS BECAUSE HE SAID THE GUERRILLAS HAD STATED THAT THEY HAD A LONG WAY TO GO. STARR TOOK ONE HAMMOCK, ONE MOSQUITO NET, CLOTHES FOR A DAY, HIS SHAVING THINGS PLUS WHAT HE HAD ON AT THE MOMENT. THE JUDGE SAID THE GUERRILLAS WERE VERY CORDIAL AND POLITE AND THAT THEY MENTIONED THEY WERE NOT GOING TO HARM ANY OF THEM BECAUSE ALL THEY WERE LOOKING FOR WERE ARMS, MONEY AND DRUGS (PRESUMABLY MEDICINE).

5. THE FARC THEN ASKED STARR TO FOLLOW THEM AND THEY WALKED OFF, GOING OVER A HILL NEAR THE AIRPORT AND THEN TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE GUAYABERO RIVER WHEN THEY DISAPPEARED FROM VIEW.

6. ASKED HOW STARR COMPORTED HIMSELF AT THE TIME OF THE KIDNAPPING, THE JUDGE SAID THAT HE LOOKED WORRIED BUT ATTEMPTED NO RESISTANCE. HE ADDED THAT STARR ALSO LOOKED ILL. (JUDGE KNEW THAT HE HAD BEEN UNDER MEDICAL TREATMENT RECENTLY.) WHEN ASKED IF THE FARC MADE ANY MENTION OF PLANS TO CONTACT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY OR OTHER OUTSIDERS, THE JUDGE REPLIED THAT HE COULD NOT REMEMBER BUT THAT HE DID HEAR THE WORD "RANSOM" MENTIONED IN CONVERSATION.

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